

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS *in California*

United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Davis, California



**Cooperation
Saves Homes
& Highway in
Yolo County
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State Conservationist Page 2**



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Vonk Vows Continued Commitment to Conservation Partnership

By

Anita Brown, State Information Officer, SO

It's official. After almost a year of anticipation, the new State Conservationist for California has been announced. Jeffrey R. Vonk, Regional Conservationist for the Northern Plains, will begin his tenure in NRCS California's top post on July 20th.

"From my perspective, the greatest excitement of coming to California will be the opportunity to live, learn and work in one of the most unique and diverse parts of our country," says Vonk.

Before his current position as Regional Conservationist in Lincoln, Neb., Vonk served in a number of state, national and international capacities. Prior to Regional Conservationist he was Deputy Chief for Programs in Washington, D.C.; the State Conservationist for Iowa; Agency Liaison to Congress; as well as working in field positions in Lima, Peru; the Caribbean and New York. Prior to life with NRCS, Vonk also worked with the Smithsonian Institute and volunteered, with his wife, Mary Anne, with the Peace Corps in Chile.

Having spent most of his time in the east and midwestern portions of the country, Vonk acknowledges that he will have a huge—albeit pleasurable—challenge in learning about the people, crops, climate, natural resources, politics and needs of California. "I expect my initial priority will be listening and learning," he says.

In conversation Vonk returns repeatedly to a central theme: Reinforcing and expanding the conservation

partnership in California. "I firmly believe in the locally led approach and I'm very committed to building and reinforcing our core partnership with Districts," he says. "It's hard to know exactly what this means in terms of specific direction at this point. I want to hear from Resource Conservation Districts and other conservation partners across the State and discuss how we can best collectively focus our abilities."

"Districts are our leaders," Vonk continues. "Historically they were created to provide leadership and priorities for our agency. It's true that since 1985 we have had national priorities thrust upon us. Nevertheless, I am committed to doing as much as possible to assist RCDs while still recognizing that we do have national mandates and responsibilities."

For those wondering what sort of management style they can expect under Vonk's watch he says with a laugh that one might do better to ask others who have worked for him than to pose the question to him directly. Then he adds that he perceives himself as a "people person" who tries to listen and learn about each person's abilities and priorities before he acts.

As for leisure time, Vonk enjoys hiking, camping, fishing and other "outdoorsy stuff." On that front, he's sure to find California a step in the right (read westerly) direction.

Questions, comments, and contributions may be forwarded to: Current Developments, NRCS Office of Public Affairs, 2121-C Second Street, Suite 102, Davis, California 95616. Call (530) 757-8260 or fax (530) 757-8217.

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Farmland as Landscapes of Joy

By

Phil Hogan, District Conservationist, Woodland FO

I was a 15-year old kid when my aerospace engineer father was transferred from Los Angeles to Denver, Colorado in 1970. Little did I know then that when I climbed into the old stationwagon with my parents, brother, and sister that just a few months later my optimistic view of the world would have a few bounds placed on it.

We moved to a new housing tract in the southeastern suburbs of Denver. Like many 15-year old kids from L.A., I did not give much thought to what had existed before where our new home and “neighborhood” now stood. Los Angeles, even in 1970, did not have an abundance of wide, open vistas and agriculture. For me, open space was a school playground or a grassy park that featured the joys of playing baseball or using caution when trying to stay clear of a gang.

Initial apprehension of leaving friends and familiarity soon turned to excitement when I looked into our new backyard and saw—well, nothing. No houses except the occasional farmstead, no shopping malls, and no freeways. The air was clean, and you could actually see the Rocky Mountains to the west. My new backyard was miles of beautiful, hilly farmland and a meandering stream called Dry Creek. And it was all mine!

Every spare moment after school and on weekends was spent exploring (and trespassing on) areas of this beautiful land. I was sure that some areas had never been seen by humans before. The creek was my favorite place. Countless hours were spent there collecting frog eggs for my biology class (if these frogs were an endangered species, I’m sure I contributed to their eventual extinction).

I went home every night after my explorations not thinking much about what the future held for

my paradise. I could hear the coyotes every night from my bedroom, and I am sure that their ignorance of their ultimate fate was exceeded only by my naivete about the permanence of nature in a world of rapid change.

Next spring, when the winter snows and cold were gone, wildlife was not the only thing to come out of hibernation. Heavy earthmoving equipment quickly changed food-producing farmland to the infrastructure needed to support hundreds of homes. My creek had been transformed from an area that supported life to merely a drainage channel for flood control.

A well-known motivational speaker said that every person must have a single, “significant emotional event” in their life that will help define what they are and will become. For me, that event was witnessing, in horror, the transformation of beauty into something that I had known all too well, L.A.-type development. Although at that time I could not know that I was going to be interested in land use planning or natural resource management as a career, the seed had been sewn. I would from then on recognize landscapes that brought me feelings of joy and those that brought me feelings of despair.

The ensuing years have brought a greater degree of maturity, helping me to realize that I had contributed to the destruction of the very area that I had loved.

Still, 28 years later, I wonder where the food for tomorrow will come from when I read reports that say that the Central Valley is the Nation’s most threatened agricultural area. I also wonder where the next little boys and girls will go to find those treasured frog eggs for their biology class.

CALFED Narrows Alternatives for Bay-Delta Solution

By Anne Schlosser, Guest Editor

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is nearing the completion of a narrowing process that will result in a “preferred alternative” for addressing problems facing the Bay-Delta, which supplies more than 23 million Californians with some or all of their drinking water. At issue are a number of “distinguishing characteristics,” which, when applied to the current options, will help identify those that best meet the program’s solution principles. The solution principles call for a plan that will reduce conflicts in the system, be equitable, affordable, durable, implementable, and have no significant redirected impacts.

“We are in the home stretch of more than two years of hard work,” says **Lester Snow**, Executive Director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. “The process we’re in now will help set the stage for an informed, productive public review process.”

CALFED, in cooperation with various public working groups and advisory committees, has identified a number of possible solutions to the problems facing the Bay-Delta system and is now assessing the alternatives.

This evaluation process will be reflected in the production of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (PEIS/EIR) that will identify a preferred alternative, or set of actions, that will best achieve the Program’s goals.

“Our goal in narrowing the alternatives is to give thoughtful, informed analysis of the options we’ve developed, and then to provide that analysis to the public,” says Snow. “The complexity and interconnectedness of the problems we’re dealing with make it crucial that we provide a solid foundation for an informed public debate.”

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program was initiated by Governor Wilson and the Clinton Administration to address the problems facing the Bay-Delta. Several years ago, it became increasingly evident that water management in California was fast approaching gridlock in its attempts to meet the competing demands of the environment, agriculture and urban water use.

Ground zero for water in the State, the location where conflicting interests powerfully converge, is the Bay-Delta, located at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and is impacted by the tides of the San Francisco Bay. Struggling to meet the needs of the environment and water users, while maintaining good water quality and a levee system that protects local towns and infrastructure from flooding, the Bay-Delta system is no longer adequately meeting any of these needs.

An historic and unprecedented cooperative effort between the State and federal governments, CALFED is made up of technical experts from various agencies and is given direction by the policy leadership of those agencies, as well as a federally chartered public advisory committee. In addition, interested constituencies and the general public have participated in numerous technical and public workshops since the Program got underway in early 1995.

The Program’s objectives are to restore the ecosystem to a level of health that ensures self-sustainability, to improve water quality in the system, to increase the functional integrity of the levee system in the Delta, and to reduce the mismatch between Bay-Delta water supplies and current and projected beneficial uses dependent on the Bay-Delta System.

All Californians are dependent upon the Bay-Delta either directly or indirectly. From receiving some or all of their water supplies; to eating food or using fibre produced in the great Central Valley; or relying on economic activity served by water from the Bay-Delta. And it will take all Californians to produce the best solution to the problems that have bedeviled California water policy for decades.

For further information about the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, please call (916) 657-2666 or visit our website, <http://calfed.ca.gov>.

*Editor’s note: NRCS is one of the major federal CALFED signatories, and **John Lowrie** is the NRCS Coordinator. Lowrie has been making presentations for NRCS, RCDs, and others to explain the process.*

Renowned Water Expert Drops by to Chat

By
Julia Grim, Geologist, SO

The State Office received a written request for NRCS program information from **Dr. Hsieh Wen Shen**, a Professor of Civil Engineering at UC-Berkeley. Well of course, we were happy to oblige, and so off went the hastily-gathered packet of information. Along with the e-mailed list of potentially pertinent web sites, I casually inquired whether he might be available and willing to come discuss some aspect of his work to interested folks here at the State Office.

Little did I know that what followed would prove to be such a boon.

The following week (March 25), Professor Shen shared his insights and experiences in the field of river restoration and watershed erosion and sedimentation. As it turned out, Shen is an internationally recognized expert in the fields of hydrology, fluvial hydraulics, and waterways management. Shen has been called upon by such entities as the United Nations, UNESCO, and PG&E to evaluate the impacts of dams and reservoirs on fluvial dynamics and ecological health of river systems throughout the world, including Egypt's Aswan Dam and the controversial Three Gorges Dam in China.

Having captured our attention with grand images of Egyptian temples and farmed terraces that spiral all the way up to the clouds, Shen fueled our enthusiasm by engaging in a discussion of fluvial dynamics and river restoration that hit a little closer to home.

Among the highlights:

The term "river restoration" is incorrectly used to describe projects that do nothing more than "make the river prettier." True river rehabilitation or enhancement projects are those that are undertaken as means of attaining one or more clearly stated objectives, for which performance criteria have been established and are being measured.

One common approach to river "restoration" is to focus on one species of concern, such as a threatened or endangered species. The goal of such projects is to preserve, reestablish, or mitigate for

losses to that one species' habitat. As an example, Professor Shen cited his work for the Bureau of Reclamation on Nebraska's Niobrara River, where a proposed dam threatened to destroy valuable whooping crane habitat. The investigation first established biological criteria by studying whooping crane habitat requirements (it just so happens that they prefer braided rivers with plenty of shallows and moderate flow velocities). Hydrological criteria that accommodate or work towards meeting the biological criteria were then identified, which served as the basis for evaluating different structural and management alternatives. Alas, the dam project was shelved for lack of money.

True river "restoration" considers the entire ecological realm, including its complexity across time and space. The goal of such projects is to restore the system to some historical (as opposed to "natural", which may no longer be feasible) condition. Unfortunately, the complexity of such systems and such undertakings makes it difficult to identify biological and hydrological criteria and establish performance indicators. Matters are further complicated by the protracted period of time that may be required to monitor and document success on such projects. Professor Shen shared his experiences on the massive Kissimmee River Restoration effort in Florida, where the Corps of Engineers is working to reestablish at least a portion of what may have been the world's most extensive wetlands. As a result of his evaluation two meandering side channels were constructed, with flows regulated by weirs and locks.

The insights and information that Professor Shen so generously shared with us were valuable, not only from a technical perspective, but also in terms of the renewed enthusiasm and active dialogue that those in attendance engaged in following the discussion. What seemed like such a casually proffered request blossomed into a wonderful opportunity to learn and exchange information, and establish a valuable contact. May we be so lucky again.

Cooperation Protects Homes & Highway in Yolo County

By Lamaia Hoffman

In February, quick action and interagency cooperation saved several homes in Yolo county and spurred plans to protect Highway 16.

Heavy rains in early February caused Cache Creek to eat into its bank about four miles upstream of Guinda, placing five houses at critical risk. Eventually, three more homes along the creek were also threatened. Additionally, the creek chewed its way within 130 feet of Highway 16, putting it at risk.

The first challenge was finding a willing sponsor. Two weeks after the event, Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, at the request of the landowners, assumed that role. "After accepting the role as sponsor, the other work proceeded quickly," said Conservationist, **Jae Lee**. A damage survey report was completed and approved one day later. Within a week, construction began on the rock riprap bank protection and jetties necessary to protect the homes at critical risk.

"Everyone went above and beyond the call of duty to make this a special case," said NRCS Design Engineer **Bill Ward**. The Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District had no responsibility to sponsor this project, yet under the leadership of **Jim Eagan**, the General Manager, they not only sponsored the project, but also secured an engineer to do the project and administered the contract.

After the homes at critical risk were saved, a home at a downstream bend became the next protection priority. The creek had continued to erode its bank, making its way toward both the home on one side and Highway 16 on the other.

"The best way to control erosion and stop damage is to address the whole bend," said NRCS Hydraulic Engineer **Tom Benson**. "The idea is to place jetties into the stream at key sites to train the water away from the outside bank. You create pools of still water on either side of the jetties, where sediment settles and lets the streambank rebuild."



Floodwaters eroding the banks along Cache Creek, upstream from Guinda.

"NRCS could not justify all the work to benefit both the home and highway since we can not protect federal highways," Benson added. CalTrans, concerned about the highway, could not justify addressing the whole creek bend either, according to District Hydraulic Engineer **Dennis Gigoda**, but they realized that through a joint effort optimum protection for both the road and home could be achieved at the same or lower cost. The resulting partnership is responsible for a comprehensive protection package—jetties and riprap along the streambank for the whole bend. CalTrans will share about half of the estimated \$200,000 cost of protecting the 700 feet of streambank.

The CalTrans/NRCS joint effort to protect the last home and Highway 16 is the only remaining part of this \$980,000 project that has protected over 2,000 feet of streambank, eight homes and a federal highway.

In summary, Ward commented, "It has been a really good effort by everyone involved and the landowners are very happy. I know they'll sleep better at night knowing that protection is in place."

Formal Agreements in Place to Guide Lake Tahoe Protection Efforts

By Jeni Rohlin, Student Intern, SO

Agriculture Secretary **Dan Glickman** reinforced the Administration's commitment to the environmental and economic health of the Lake Tahoe region in a landmark ceremony held in Zephyr Cove, Nevada, on October 29, 1997. The signing of two memorandums of Agreement (MOA) represents the first major milestone in the implementation of actions directed by **President Clinton** during his visit to Lake Tahoe last July.

"We are here today to celebrate Lake Tahoe and the Administration's dedication to this beautiful lake," said Glickman. "We are here to pay tribute to the partnerships which have made Lake Tahoe a role model for communities around the country, partnerships which are working to ensure that this national jewel does indeed have a prosperous and healthy future," he added.

The first memorandum, signed by all leaders of the federal agencies active in the Lake Tahoe Basin, puts into place the Federal Interagency Partnership on the Lake Tahoe Ecosystem, called for in an Executive Order signed by Clinton during the Presidential Forum of July 26. The partnership, which is to meet several times a year, will coordinate operations "...to protect the extraordinary natural, recreational and ecological resources of the Lake Tahoe Region and the economy that depends on them." Co-signers of the document with Glickman were Interior Secretary **Bruce Babbitt**, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator **Carol Browner**, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) **John Zirschky**, and Secretary of Transportation **Rodney Slater**.

The other MOA was created to facilitate coordination between the Federal Interagency Partnership and the states of Nevada and California, the Washoe Tribe and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). In the agreement, the signatories reaffirmed their commitment to the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact to TRPA's Environmental Improvement Program, as well as to a comprehensive effort to protect



Secretary of Agriculture **Dan Glickman** is shown signing a MOA. Back row from left to right: **Lynn Sprague**, United States Department of Agriculture & Forest Service; **Jim Baetge**, executive director, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency; **Jim Lyons**, Under Secretary of agriculture; **Bob Miller**, governor of Nevada; **Juan Palma**, forest supervisor, United States Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Front row: **Brian Wallace**, chairman of the Washoe Tribe.

the lake. Nevada Governor **Bob Miller**, TRPA Executive Director **James Baetge**, and **Brian Wallace**, chairman of the Washoe Tribe, were present for the signing of this document, which also provides for participation by the state of California. Acting State Conservationist **Hank Wyman** and District Conservationist **Joe Thompson**, who represented NRCS, were also present at the signing table.

In another historic gesture at the ceremony, **Juan Palma**, supervisor of the Tahoe Basin Management Unit, signed two special-use permits, granting the members of the Washoe Tribe short-term access to the waters of Lake Tahoe for the first time in more than 100 years. These permits will be in place while USDA Forest Service personnel complete environmental documentation for longer-term permits.

"We are pleased to assist the Washoe Tribe in gaining better access to land with which they have a deep spiritual and traditional connection," said Palma.

Charles Davis Honored as

ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

By Dave Sanden, Writer-Editor, SO

On February 26, State Conservation Engineer **Charles Davis** was honored as “Engineer of the Year” from the Natural Resources Conservation Service at an award ceremony in Arlington, Virginia.

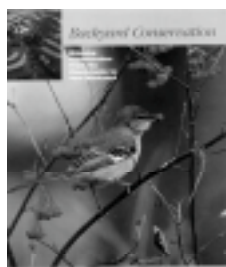
Davis was selected for the award by the National Society of Professional Engineers in recognition of his outstanding achievements and activities as a practicing engineer in government. The award made him eligible for selection as the national “Federal Engineer of the Year,” the outstanding engineer in the Federal Government.

“This is a great honor,” said Davis. “It’s reflective of management support and the work done by the interdisciplinary team in California. No one can achieve progress alone.”

Having served a decade-long tenure as chief conservation engineer and disaster response

leader for NRCS in California, Davis was chosen to be the first regionwide engineering consortium leader for twelve western states after NRCS’s restructuring in 1995. He acts as a national consultant on disaster response and has aided international development efforts.

Accomplishments that led to Davis’ nomination for the engineer award include his leadership in the adoption of new technology; initiation of an effective system for quick disaster response following earthquakes, fires, floods, and dust storms; development of a nationally used technical manual for disaster response; and service as technical advisor for international development in Egypt and South Africa. Davis’ work in Egypt included irrigation and water management projects. In South Africa, he served as senior engineer supporting conservation work to improve sustainable agriculture for the United States-South Africa Binational Commission.



Backyard Conservation

A new Backyard Conservation campaign shows how conservation practices used on agricultural land to conserve and improve natural resources can be adapted for use on the land around your home.

Whether you have acres in the country, an average-sized suburban yard, or a tiny plot in the city, you can help protect the environment and add beauty and interest to your surroundings. Conservation practices have been scaled down for

homeowners and city residents to use in their yards. Most backyard conservation practices are easy to use. America’s farmers and ranchers have been using these practices successfully for decades.

Tip sheets and a colorful 28-page booklet on Backyard Conservation are available free on the World-Wide-Web at www.nrcs.usda.gov or by calling 1-888-LANDCARE (single copies only). This campaign is a cooperative project of NRCS, the National Association of Conservation Districts, and the Wildlife Habitat Council.

PlacerGrown Farm Conference

By Jeni Rohlin, Student Intern, SO

About 260 people attended the educational PlacerGrown Farm Conference of prestigious speakers, participatory workshops and vendor exhibits & displays, held in Lincoln on January 31.

George Reading, T.V. host of *California Heartland*, keynoted the event. His speech, "Media Marketing in the New Millennium," addressed how farmers can best use the power of the media and emphasized the importance of a provocative story to be effective and receive attention. "If its teasable its probably sellable," Reading said.

Reading presented various video clips from the AgroArt Festival of myriad fruit and veggie sculptures, where art and agriculture converged to make a product both alluring and effective. Reading provided the farmers with one final tip: "Bring passion to what you're doing."

One of four workshops on Sustaining Agriculture, *Farm Bill, Ag Legislation, and the FSA*, covered various programs such as EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program), WHIP (Wild Life Habitat Incentive Program), FIP (Forestry Incentive Program) and WRP (Wetland Reserve Program). Participants discussed technical assistance needed to establish conservation practices. "We will develop a conservation plan for you, tailored to your own

needs, absolutely free," said NRCS representative **Carol Rutenbergs**.



RC&D Director **Bob Roan** (left) greets guest speaker **George Reading**.

Farmer/Consultant **Nick Greco** addressed the availability of loans. "The government is trying to focus on getting more small farmers back into society," he said. Loans were presented as a viable alternative for farmers having a



Bob Roan (shown left) with FFA teachers **Pat McCarty** and **Mike Trueblood** of Lincoln High School who were presented with the Annual Agriculturalists of the Year Award.

difficult time receiving conventional financing. "Agriculture is a changing and dynamic industry now," noted Greco.

Sustaining Agriculture was one of nine "strands" of participatory workshops that provided agricultural producers with tips and incentives, as well as the opportunity to pose questions and foster discussion on individual matters.

The trade show following the workshops allowed participants interaction with the various businesses and Ag agencies present. An NRCS display was among the exhibits. Themes of the display included: Forest Management for Health and Fire Safety, Irrigation Assistance and Erosion and Sediment Control. Below the panel the sign-up book for free assistance was quickly filled.

"We were really happy with the success of the turnout," said **Bob Roan**, Project Coordinator for High Sierra RC&D. "I think it really was one of our best conferences," he said.

Upper Putah Creek Watershed Project

By Lamaia Hoffman

The Upper Putah Creek Watershed drains 558 square miles of southern Lake County and northern Napa County, into Lake Berryessa. Although it is a rural area with just a few towns, the population is growing. For years, frustrated local landowners have watched their land wash away, devaluing their property and sometimes threatening their homes. Although chronic flooding and streambank erosion are the watershed's most apparent problems, concerns also include soil erosion, a safe and adequate water supply, riparian habitat loss, and a build up of wildfire fuel. Continued development in the area makes watershed health more important than ever. Flooding and land devaluation due to stream bank erosion caused local people to seek agency help.

NRCS, the Army Corps of Engineers, several university groups, and other state and local agencies as well as local citizens groups have concentrated efforts on the Upper Putah Creek Watershed to address the watershed's problems. Through town meetings, watershed residents and the Corps, the lead agency, decided that the best overall approach was through a "Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan." New authorities granted to the Corps allow them to consider all aspects and possible solutions to challenges, not limited to traditional structural solutions. For example, revegetation and streambank stabilization now join flood control dams, stabilized channels, and levees as possible watershed restoration solutions.

"This project is really planning for the future, so we can more thoroughly understand what we have in order to preserve and enhance the quality of life a healthy watershed offers," explained **Helen Whitney**, a local champion and visionary driving the project.

Houses built near streams, such as this home near Cobb mountain, are flood disasters waiting to happen.



Whitney believed that to ensure an understanding of and support for a comprehensive, constructive management plan, the community needed a broad perspective on all the watershed resources, in an easily accessible form. The Upper Putah Creek Stewardship therefore approached East Lake Resource Conservation District to request a resources inventory. District Conservationist **Len Kashuba** supported the idea, and the NRCS Watershed Planning Services assigned a team of professionals to conduct the resources inventory.

Headed by Biologist **Bill Cunningham**, the team is currently conducting an assessment of all the hydrologic, geologic, soil, vegetative, wildlife, and cultural resources as well as land uses in the area. The team is also developing a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database to digitally store inventoried resource information.

Beyond the resources inventory, NRCS has formed a close working partnership with the Corps in watershed management. NRCS brings a wealth of knowledge from its work with private landowners and an awareness of natural resource, social and community considerations. The Corps adds resources and invaluable experience with structural solutions. Working together allows the agencies to draw on each other's strengths and experiences and allows more staff time and money to be focused on the project.

Cooperation between agencies, and with watershed residents, yields more thorough alternatives and increases citizen appreciation for and participation in, their watershed.



Winds of Change

By Tracy McDermott, Personnel Actions Clerk, SO

"The answer my friend is blowing in the wind." I don't know about you, but here in personnel we are always feeling the winds of change and we don't mean El Niño!

Thanks to Employee Express we can blow away more of the never ending paper trail. You can make your own personal paperless revisions. Allotments, health benefits, TSP actions, direct deposits, federal and state taxes and home address changes can be made, using that ever popular PIN number (received in the mail at your home). I am sure you all have it memorized and have anxiously been awaiting an opportunity to use it at www.employeeexpress.gov or 800-827-6291. If your brain cells fail you, please call 912-757-3030 and you will be PINned again.

How many of you have seen the poster "You can take it with you" the motto for Thrift Savings Plan open season? For those of you who actually have something to take or somewhere to go, now is the chance to add, subtract or change those allocations beginning May 15 through July 31, 1998. Opportunity only knocks twice a year, so make sure you check into your options.

We all know **President Clinton** has been very busy while in office. One of his many activities is a request to repeal an open season for employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) which would allow them to change to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) if they so desire. To date, this option is planned as an open season from July 1, 1998 through December 31, 1998. An official announcement will be forthcoming and we will be more than happy to help anyone considering this change.

Jodi Nielsen, Administrative Assistant, whom many of you have come to know through her fantastic support in personnel will be in Nebraska, June 1 through June 12 at NEDC, Orientation for New Employees training. The rest of us in Human Resources (**Sharon, Kathy and Tracy**) will do our best to keep things calm and mild!

Personnel Actions

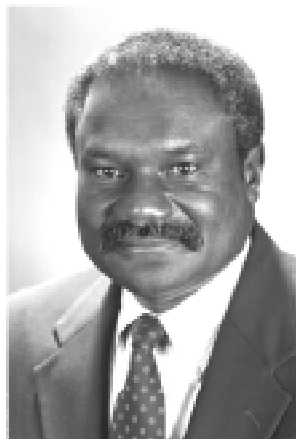
NAME	POSITION	ACTION	GRADE	LOCATION	DATE
Thornton, Carolyn	Soil Conserv.	Promotion	GS-07	Woodland FO	2/15/98
Ransom, Madalene	State Economist	Realignment	GS-12	WPS	2/15/98
Medeiros, Wendy	Personnel Clerk	Term-appt in Treasury	GS-06	Seattle	2/28/98
Dix, Allan	District Con	Reassignment	GS-12	Vermont	3/16/98
Gery, Marsha	Public Affairs Spec.	Realignment	GS-12	STC Staff	2/15/98
Bao, Don	St. Tr. Engr.	Termination (SCEP)	GS-05	Redlands FO	3/13/98
Monsue, Amanda	St. Tr. Biology	Resignation	GS-05	Somis FO	2/23/98
Hoffman, Lamaia	St. Tr. Soil Con.	Exc Appt (SCEP)	GS-05	Salinas FO	3/15/98
Dougherty, Lori	Reader	Termination	GS-03	Davis SO	4/14/98
Pellerin, Percy	Range Tech	Termination	GS-04	29 Palms SSO	3/14/98
Andreasen, Valli	Range Tech	Termination	GS-04	Barstow	3/17/98
Meloy, Dorothy	Soil Scientist	Termination	GS-05	29 Palms SSO	3/14/98
Rees, Julie	OA Clerk	Special Needs	GS-01	Alturas FO	3/15/98

Q&A with NRCS Chief Pearlie Reed

Reprinted from *Tuesday Letter*, Spring 1998

Pearlie Reed, who was named Chief of the NRCS on March 1, answered a few questions for the *Tuesday Letter* that were submitted by conservation districts from around the country. Reed a 28-year USDA employee, was named acting assistant secretary for USDA in February 1997. Before that, he had been an associate chief of NRCS and an SCS state conservationist in California and Maryland.

Reed also served in the SCS headquarters in Washington DC, from 1977 to 1981 in several positions, including financial manager, budget analyst, and administrative officer for the National Agricultural Lands Study.



*NRCS Chief
Pearlie Reed*

What do you want to accomplish as Chief of the NRCS?

One of my major objectives is to take the best of what the great conservationists who preceded me have done and use it in such a way that we can make this organization even better.

First among these is to ensure that our focus is placed squarely on program delivery to our field customers. I want to do everything to reduce the bureaucratic burden on customers and employees—to free up our time so we can focus on getting conservation on the land.

What do you consider to be your number one priority?

We must make sure that our conservation partners—conservation districts, state conservation agencies, resource conservation and development councils, and others—are factored into everything we do. It is of critical importance to the future of our agency that we move forward in harmony and unison with our partners, making sure that the locally led concept becomes our way of doing business.

What is your position on the Grants to Districts program?

I support the concept. Districts have been underfunded, especially in recent times. For that reason, I am pleased that the President's budget contains provisions for providing competitive partnership grants, and also incentives for leveraging state and local contributions. However, these funds are an increase that was requested as part of our budget proposal, and we need to make sure that any new program is funded with new federal

money. If we are successful in making the case for increased support for technical assistance both in Washington and the state legislatures, both NRCS and its partners will gain more resources to get the job done.

How will NRCS fulfill its role as a technical assistance agency in the future? Is the agency going to continue to move more toward providing assistance through programs (EQIP, CRP, etc.) or is NRCS going to place greater emphasis on providing basic conservation technical assistance to land users?

I want to make it clear that the mission of NRCS has been, and still is, to provide technical assistance to landowners. No doubt, recent farm bills have placed a premium on financial assistance and easement and rental activities. However, these are just a few of the tools that help us achieve our goals. Our basic goal is to help the farmer, rancher, or landowner to become a better steward of the resources. But the programs are there to work for us, not the other way around. This is something that we need to better articulate as we move toward future legislation.

TRINITY RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES UPDATE

By

John Earle, Admin. Assist., Trinity RC&D, Weaverville, CA

The Trinity RC&D Council in Weaverville California is geared up for another active year of providing a way for the people of Trinity County to plan and work together to develop solutions to their local problems.

Council and staff are working on a medley of adopted projects to accomplish a wide variety of goals. The following summaries of selected projects provide some highlights of their most recent or proposed activities.

Trinity Agriculture Project

The Trinity Agriculture project has developed into an array of activities. One of its components, the Weather Data Collection project, was recently submitted for funding through the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Rural Community Assistance Program. The project proposes to purchase and install a series of weather data collection systems throughout Trinity County. Each station, monitored by a volunteer host, will be designed to gather and analyze site-specific information that will be used to make important decisions concerning crop development. A lack of this vital information has been identified as an obstacle to agricultural diversification in Trinity County. Over time, the micro-climate data will be compiled to create a Trinity County Growers' Guide.

Trinity Ag Forum

Another active component of the Trinity Agriculture project is the Trinity Ag Forum. Initiated in 1996, the Ag Forum is a group of area residents who meet voluntarily to discuss all aspects of agriculture. The Forum acts as an advisory committee offering information on a variety of agricultural issues to the public as a no-cost outreach service. Recent topics of discussion have included certified organic farming, agriculture operations financing, water rights issues, farmers' markets, and natural beef marketing. The group also participated in a field trip involving a tour

of High Mountain Herb Cooperative's new processing facility in Bridgeville California.

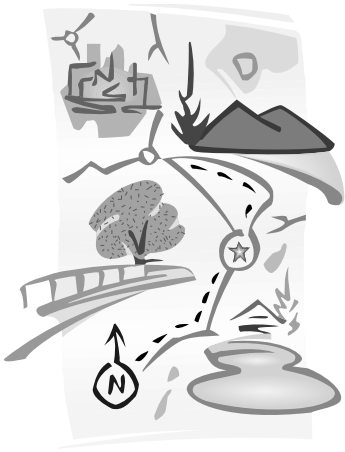
Weaverville Basin Trail and Greenway Project

The Weaverville Basin Trail and Greenway project received funding this year through the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Rural Community Assistance Program. A trail coordinator will be hired to design and implement a master plan that will detail planning, development, and promotional measures for Weaverville's 40-mile mixed-use trail system. Development of the trail and greenway system will help to promote tourism in Trinity County and will provide local residents with a close-to-home recreational facility. The developed trail system will include many historic interpretive sections displaying Trinity County's early culture and will serve as a recreational model for similar projects throughout the nation.

Indian Valley Project

The Trinity RC&D Council recently adopted the Indian Valley project. The project will involve renovating and reopening the abandoned U.S. Forest Service Guard Station at Indian Valley in the Shasta/Trinity National Forest as a multi-use recreational facility. The Council is sponsoring the project by acting as the non-profit organization to oversee negotiations in the development of use permits and contracts. The Council has submitted a special use permit application to the Forest Service. The project has initiated many interested partnerships that are eager to participate in the facility's development and use.

For additional information about the Trinity Resource Conservation and Development program and any of its adopted projects or to be placed on a mailing list for meeting announcements and minutes, write to Scott Eberly, Project Coordinator, PO Box 1450, Weaverville, CA 96093 or call 530-623-2009 ext. 3.



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Two New RC&D Areas

By Lamaia Hoffmann

On March 17, 1998, Agriculture Secretary **Dan Glickman** announced the addition of two new Resource Conservation and Development Districts in California, Central Sierra and South Coast. The Central Sierra RC&D encompasses Calaveras, Alpine, and Tuolumne Counties. Southern Coast RC&D includes an approximately 50-mile stretch of coast extending from Ventura County through San Diego County to the Mexican border.

“RC&D typifies our belief in the importance of effective grassroots leadership. This type of leadership is critical for community development and the conservation of our natural resources,” said NRCS Chief **Pearlie Reid**. “We are pleased that the people and communities in these new RC&D areas will enjoy the benefits of this vital program.”

RC&D leadership depends on a council of local private and governmental volunteers who initiate and direct programs to wisely develop and conserve natural resources, while improving economic activity in the area. Local residents determine the resource, economic, and social needs of, and solutions for, their own communities.

An Area Coordinator provided by NRCS works with the council and functions as a motivator and expeditor of council determined plans and partnerships. Each dollar spent on RC&D areas generates from \$10 to \$20 for projects.

“We are glad to have these new RC&D areas on board,” said Glickman. “Through the program, people in these areas will have unprecedented opportunities to take the lead in making their communities better places to live.”

Movin' On Up



This issue, we say good-bye to student intern **Jeni Rohlin**. Working with the Public Affairs staff as an Earth Team volunteer for more than six months, Jeni assisted with the publication of *Current Developments* by writing articles, editing, laying out pages, shooting photos, and field reporting.

Jeni will start work as a broadcast journalism intern in Washington D.C. this summer, through a UC Davis program.

We all appreciate Jeni's help and wish her the best of luck!

Hammer Award

By Lamaia Hoffmann

The Elkhorn Slough Project was recently awarded Vice President **Al Gore's** Hammer Award for its innovation and effectiveness. The award is designed to acknowledge reinvention of federal government so that it "costs less and works better."

The Elk Horn Slough Project overcomes cultural barriers that have rendered ineffective traditional technical conservation assistance aimed at reducing the average loss of 33 tons an acre of soil from the watershed's strawberry fields each year. This sediment, and the pesticides it carries with it, travels to the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Reserve.

Most of the strawberry growers in the watershed are of Mexican ancestry. To address cultural differences, **Daniel Mountjoy**, the project coordinator, and his interdisciplinary team, in cooperation with local farmers, adapted the Small Watershed Program to fit the cultural, economic and ecological context of the area.

"We really listened to the needs and concerns of the land operators to find ways to meet those needs while also meeting the needs of the environment," said **Mountjoy**. The team created a flexible, grass-roots level program that overcomes barriers to participation in government programs, develops conservation technologies that are compatible with social, financial and ecological conditions, and utilizes other, existing relevant programs to help achieve conservation goals.

The search for common ground has been very successful not just in terms of soil saved, but also in terms of client satisfaction. **Mountjoy** asserted, "Farmers now come to me saying, 'This has saved me money and is helping the environment!'"

Congratulations Salinas Field Office and NRCS!

California Water Supply Outlook Report

By Marianne Hallet, Water Supply Specialist, SO

With the reservoir storage at about 115 percent of average and streamflows forecasted above average, water supply should not be a problem for most water users in the state this summer.

For more information about California Water Supply, call **Marianne Hallet** at (530) 757-8305

Steering Committee Selected for URP

By Emmet Cartier, Urban Conservationist

The San Francisco Urban Resources Partnership (URP), with the addition of a steering committee, will be one step closer to selecting a community assistance project. The committee, which is the decision making body of the partnership, will be comprised of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Forest Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, a San Francisco city government representative, San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, Trust for Public Land, and one more non-government agency and one citizen-at-large. This steering committee will be in effect for the next six months at which point it will be evaluated for its effectiveness. Changes in the structure will be made as necessary.

NRCS was represented at all three URP meetings held this quarter. The group focused its initial efforts on the southeast section of San Francisco, an area that is widely accepted as being an undeserved community. A variety of projects, partners, and needs have been identified so far, with more yet to be considered and evaluated.

Funds for fiscal year 1998 have been provided by the Forest Service (\$50,000) and Environmental Protection Agency (\$25,000). NRCS is serving as the fiscal agent for the Forest Service's contribution. Team Leader Lisa Hokholt has made arrangements to insure the availability of the funds through next fiscal year and will be working on identifying ways in which an URP coordinator can be hired or assigned. Area Resource Conservationist Ed Umbach has been a valuable resource in sharing his expertise during the initial start-up phase of the San Francisco URP.



CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS *in California*

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